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HOME LIFE IN CUBA



Published by

AMERICAN FRIENDS BOARD OF MISSIONS
101 South Eighth Street
RICHMOND, INDIANA





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HIRAM H. HILTY

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PREFACE

This is one of the seven pamphlets on Home Life, which taken together make up the fourth in the series of study materials dealing with various phases of life on our mission fields, namely: Education, Religious Life and Economic Life.

The other pamphlets in this series include Home Life in Kenya Colony, Jamaica, Mexico, Ramallah, Monroe County, Tennessee and of the Oklahoma Indians.

The purpose of this study is to assist Friends to become acquainted with the Home Life in Cuba, and to show the influence of Christian training upon the family unit and its place in community life.

HOME LIFE IN CUBA

Majestic Royal Palms, banana trees, fields of growing pineapple, endless seas of green sugar cane bending in the island breezes, vast cattle ranches, cowboys in full Hollywood regalia, palatial residences with their neat tile roofs and lovely tropical gardens, flashy automobiles with liveried chauffeurs, broad, tree-lined avenues with imposing monuments, new super-highways, safe scheduled airlines, modernistic school buildings even in remote rural areas, model prisons, world-famed beaches with the finest sand and the bluest water to be found anywhere in the world, luxury hotels, roof gardens, soft music on tropical nights with gay young people dancing under the stars, a land of eternal summer where 65 degrees seems cold and is unusual in winter, even though summer temperatures rarely go above 90 and never reach 100; a gay friendly people, racially handsome and of neat habits of dress, intellectually alert and of a generous heart; open doors and sidewalk cafes, baseball and jai alai; ancient cathedrals and landmarks which antedate Plymouth Rock and St. Augustine, colorful religious processions and priests in flowing robes . . . who could adequately sing the praises of "Bella Cuba," the Pearl of the Antilles, the storied isle of literature, the erstwhile sugar bowl of the world!

There is much more to say: Carlos Findlay conquering Yellow Fever, Ernesto Lecuona charming the world with Cuban music and a thousand more natural and human marvels. There is indeed much more to say: A million and more near serfs living like the primitive tribes of Africa in crude bark huts, nearly half of the population illiterate, hundreds of miles of neglected, virtually impassable roads, children emaciated from intestinal parasites, yellow, malarial complexions, tiny baby caskets wending their sad way to the cemetery, typhoid epidemics and more hearses, children begging for bread in the streets, the aged and the crippled wandering woefully from house to house seeking alms, classes in Communist dialectics under the portrait of Lenin and Communist rallies invoking judgment on the overlords, pork barrel politics with never enough pork

to go around, rampant nepotism from the presidency to the local town hall, bitter strikes, occupied cities, murder, rape, sabotage, disillusioned youth crowding the American consulates seeking visas. This too is Cuba. And still there is much more to say.

For the life of a whole people is complex, even if it is a nation of only five million. Only five million. Have you ever seen five million people? Can you tell all about 160 million Americans? Neither could I ever tell you all about the Cubans. The best thing for you to do is to go see for yourself. I'll wire my friend Juan Perez who is on vacation just now from the National University and he will meet you at Camaguey. You will like Juan, I'm sure, and he will be an excellent person to tell you about life in Cuba.

You catch a streamliner for Miami. The endless pines and sandy flats of Florida, the fabulous resorts on the east coast beaches, the ersatz paradises of Palm Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, and Miami, and the great International Airport of Miami. The loud-speakers read off the geography of the hemisphere: Havana, San Juan, Port Au Prince, Ciudad Trujillo, Kingston, Colon, Panama, Baranquilla, Caracas, Lima, Santiago, Rio, Montevideo, Buenos Aires. Here is one of the great cross-roads of the world. Spanish and Portuguese mingle with English on every hand.

But here is your great airliner ready to take off for Camaguey—and Kingston and Panama. The flight across the straits of Florida is calm and beautiful but all too short. In less than two hours the city of Camaguey comes into view and you find yourself in the competent hands of my good friend, Juan Perez. He greets you in good English—and a warm smile and a hearty handshake. A taxi whisks you away from the airport and in a few minutes you are in downtown Camaguey. As you alight from the taxi an auctioneer voice cries out: "El tres mil quinientos ochenta! Tres mil quinientos ochenta! Americano, amigo, compremelo! Saca el premio gordo, sabe. De big prize, you know!"*

*(Number) "3,580, 3,580! American, friend, buy it from me . . . "

"What's this fellow trying to sell me?" you ask Juan.

"Oh, Him? On your way fellow, vaya! He's selling tickets for the national lottery. It's a nuisance."

You have a couple of hours until your bus leaves so you stroll the streets and take in the atmosphere. The streets are narrow and choked with traffic. Store fronts have attractive displays—mostly of American merchandise. As you move along you are accosted by a thousand lottery ticket vendors who won't take "no" for an answer; a thousand shoeshine boys remind you that in Cuba your shoes must have a mirror polish. You have lunch and discuss food and discover that Cubans prefer rice and "platanos" to potatoes, that peaches and fruit cocktail are expensive delicacies, that they are heavy meat eaters and in a general way prefer somewhat heavier and more highly-seasoned food than Americans. And you discover too that it is very difficult to eat inexpensively.

At length you are off to Holguin, your destination, in a bus. And what a bus! It is a beautiful semi-trailer job; the baggage goes into the cab and a uniformed stewardess attends your every wish on the trip. How different than you had expected! What a far cry from the pictures of primitive conditions that you had seen in pictures and pamphlets on Friends Missions in Cuba! You are confirmed in your feeling that missionaries are a biased lot. After some hours of rolling along the smooth and scenic Central Highway you begin to note changes along the countryside. For one thing there seem to be no highway intersections. Instead an occasional mud road winds off into the distance, and more often a simple path leads to a house or two back on a farm. That is, some of them are houses—very nice ones—but most of them . . . well, they look very picturesque in a rustic sort of way, their thatched roofs hanging close to the ground, but as a place to live in they leave much to be desired. Juan explains that they are called "bohios."

It's all so different from the suburbs of Camaguey—and Indiana. Great trucks ply the highway with loads of pineapples and bananas, but the farmers themselves gallop along on

the country paths and congregate at the country stores on rather hungry-looking horses. There don't seem to be many Buicks in farmers' garages—or garages. You observe and are pensive.

"Juan," you say at length, "I don't quite understand this. From the looks of things we are passing through a poor section of the country, but that is some of the richest-looking soil I have ever seen. And it really grows stuff too. But the people living here look like they were having as hard a time of it as our poorest mountaineers on rocky hillsides. What goes on here?"

"I don't quite know what you mean. Times are good. The farmers are making more money than ever."

"But," you protest, "why don't they build new houses and roads and buy cars and things like that if they have so much money?"

"Oh, well, they haven't made that much money. That is most of them haven't. Some of them gamble away most of it on the lottery or at cockfights. Others put their money in the bank and don't spend it on anything. The Cuban 'campesino'—farmer, that is—is used to a very simple way of life and it doesn't matter to him if he doesn't have all the modern conveniences. It never gets cold here so he doesn't need much of a house, and the campesino loves his horse. He wouldn't part with it even if he had a million dollars."

"By the way," you interject, "what about the donkeys—the 'burros'? Don't the Cuban 'campesinos,' as you say, use burros at all?"

"No—almost never. You see in Spain they use many burros because the people are very poor. If a Spaniard can afford it he owns a horse instead. So the Cuban is very proud to have a horse instead of a burro. We leave the burros to the poor Mexicans."

You are still uneasy about the campesino. "Do these people own their own land?" you ask.

"Many of them do, but many more are just workers on huge plantations. That is true especially on the sugar planta-

tions. Sociologists have pointed out that while the Cuban countryside gives the appearance of an agricultural country it is in fact a vast industrial plant. The workers on the plantations and in the mills happen to live in the country but they are not farmers. They work for wages. And the trouble is that sugar is a seasonal industry and the work only lasts from three to six months. The rest of the time the workers have a hard time of it. Many of them get deep into debt to the landlord for groceries and things and even with pretty good wages it takes him all the rest of the year to get out of debt. Some never get out of debt."

At the next rest stop you are besieged by vendors and beggars. "What about all this begging?" you ask Juan. "Is there no organized aid for the poor?"

"Oh, yes. There are homes for the aged poor and the government has several large orphanages. But there is never enough room for all of them."

"I noticed that many of those selling lottery tickets are strong, able-bodied men. Isn't there anything else they can do?"

"We always have considerable unemployment," says Juan, "but I'm afraid most of these don't want to work. They'd rather beg or sell lottery tickets."

The bus rolls on through the lush green countryside dominated everywhere by the stately Royal Palm. Once or twice you catch sight of a huge sugar mill with its enormous smokestack reaching up out of the sea of green cane surrounding it. Workmen swinging heavy, cleaver-like knives, strip and cut the cane, throwing it onto piles from which it is loaded on huge, rubber-tired carts pulled by tractors. Sometimes there are 3 or 4 of these loaded carts behind one tractor hurrying on its way to the nearest railroad siding. Then again the sugar plantations give way to huge cattle ranches. You see more cowboys than you thought existed in this day and age. Many of the ranch homes are nice, modern structures surrounded by lovely formal gardens. Then again a region of small farms with the tenants subsisting in their tiny thatched "bohios."

At length you reach Holguin itself. Lottery tickets, newspapers, cookies and candy, taxies, razor blades, beggars and throngs of evening strollers choking the colonnaded sidewalk where you get off.

"Lively town you live in, Juan," you observe.

"Never a dull moment," he confirms.

Juan's brother and sister are waiting at the station and after warm embraces—for Juan himself is returning from a long absence in Havana—you are introduced. Unlike Juan, they do not speak English so you must put your poor Spanish to work.

"Mucho gusto," you say in the exaggerated enunciation of the foreigner who is not quite sure of himself. You mentally note that Carmen, the sister, is bewitchingly attractive—as are so many of the girls you have already seen in Cuba. A handsome race, these Cubans.

The Perez home is only a few blocks from the station so you decide to walk. You pick up your bag, after having tipped the bus attendant, and start up the street—or that is you try to. Pancho, Juan's brother, grabs your bag from you and insists that under no circumstances will you be permitted to carry it. You protest but before you know it Pancho not only has taken the bag but has passed it on to the barefoot boy in rags who has been pleading with you ever since you got off the bus.

"But that's ridiculous," you complain. "You said it was only a block or two . . ."

"Never mind," says Pancho, "I'll take care of the boy."

"By no means, but . . . Oh, well . . ."

Shortly you stop in front of a door in the great solid line of buildings that border on the narrow sidewalk. It is a huge door with an enormous brass knocker and it opens to you. This is the Perez home. The parents receive you warmly and in a moment you are made to feel welcome and at ease. The great "sala"—the living room—is the room which you enter from the street. The beautiful tile floor is gleaming and the room is

attractively furnished. Instead of the overstuffed furniture to which you are accustomed, cool, reed chairs and sofas are used. Everyone is seated and the conversation begins in Spanish. If they just didn't talk so fast—or if they would turn off the infernal radio! But no, the radio blares on and the talking and the laughing continue. Two great French windows open to the floor toward the street and on the other side of the heavy iron bars moves the noisy life of the city. Cars, trucks, endless blaring of trumpets, sound cars broadcasting political propaganda, and the lottery ticket vendors who put their hands through the bars and plead while they wave their tickets. Your head swims, but nobody else seems to mind. At length through the din you begin to find the conversation more intelligible and occasionally, with the help of Juan, join in.

"How do you like Cuba?" they ask. The question will recur everywhere you go throughout your visit. They are anxious that you like it.

"It's a poor country," Senor Perez goes on to say. It is very different from the United States, but after all there is no place like ones 'patria'. We live a simple life but we love it. There are things that we regret—like the poverty of the masses and the bad politics, but we take the bitter with the sweet. We have a saying from Jose Marti—you know he was the father of our country just like your George Washington—Marti said: 'Nuestro vino es agrio, pero es nuestra vino'."*

The night is cool and you sleep in comfort. With the dawn of Sunday morning you are awakened by a knock on the door which turns out to be the servant with a demitasse of black coffee. You accept it with thanks, although the strength of the coffee makes you pucker a bit. Before you get through with shaving, Senora Perez and Carmen are already on their way to early mass. Vendors are crying their wares in the streets. Breakfast of "cafe con leche"—hot milk with a dash of black coffee—and bread, comes after mother and daughter have returned from mass. In any case breakfast must always wait until after the milkman arrives and the milk has had time to boil.

*Our wine is bitter, but is our wine.

"You always boil your milk?" you ask.

"Why yes, of course, we wouldn't consider it sanitary to drink milk without boiling it," answers Senora Perez. "It kills the germs."

"But . . . isn't the milk pasteurized?"

"No. There was a time many years ago when General Gerardo Machado was dictator that they made the farmers take all their milk to a pasteurizing plant before it could be sold. But imagine the chagrin of the farmers when they sold their milk to the plant for five cents a quart and saw it peddled in the streets for ten cents. When we had the revolution in 1933 and Machado had to leave, the farmers came in and smashed all the pasteurizing machinery. So now we boil our milk again."

After breakfast you go with Juan to Sunday School, for Juan is the only Protestant in the family. He attended "Los Amigos"—the Friends School (as indeed did his brother and sister) and was attracted by the simplicity and sincerity of Friends. The Sunday School lesson is fairly intelligible because you know what the scripture lesson is and you can follow along with the discussion. After class it seems evident that you are going home.

"But Juan!" you protest, "I always go to church too on Sunday morning. Aren't we going to stay?"

"Oh, I forgot to explain," says Juan, "that we have our worship service in the evening. All Protestant churches do. It gets so hot by 11:00 o'clock that a public meeting is impossible. In Cuba all important meetings are at night. Why even the national legislature meets at night."

"I suppose that during the heat of the day everyone takes a 'siesta'."

"Well, a lot of people do, I suppose, but certainly not everyone. We do close all stores and offices from 12:00 to 2:00. but let's go home and have some lunch."

Sunday in Cuba, you learn—aside from the early morning vendors—is not so different from Sunday at home. Probably

fewer people go to church—especially men—but the secular pattern of an American Sunday today is traditional in Cuba. Early morning mass for those Catholics who go to church, and then loafing, visiting, going to the movies, strolling in the parks, going to baseball games and cockfights. Sunday night is the time of the great promenade in the central park. You go with Juan to the evening service at the Friends church and find it every way similar to your own at home—except, of course, that everything is in Spanish. It gives you a weird feeling to hear familiar hymns in a foreign language.

Afterward you accompany Juan to the park with most of the young people who have been at church. There are hundreds of people there strolling back and forth on its smoothly paved surface. Everyone is well dressed—it strikes you as almost a dress parade. Juan points out the system: The boys circulate in one direction and the girls in another. As the parade passes the boys look over the lot and make a selection. If she—and her inevitable chaperon—approve, he may join her and they walk together—still accompanied by the chaperon.

"You mean to say," you ask incredulously, "that girls must always have chaperons even for going for short walks with boys under the bright lights?"

"No decent girl goes anywhere at night—even without a chaperon. Some of us think it's a bit silly but then I guess it has its good points too. Mother won't listen to Carmen's going to college in the States—like she wants to—because she has heard that young people date without chaperons there."

That night you and Juan have a long bull session about it all.

"Well, Roger," he begins, "How does Cuba look to you after your first Sunday?"

"Oh, the whole life is a little strange, but as far as Sunday is concerned I guess it isn't too different. The old Puritan Sunday in the United States was a pretty straight-laced affair they say, but it isn't that way anymore. But I'm old-fashioned enough to like to get in some extra thinking on Sundays and

I've done a lot today. While the minister was preaching tonight I'm afraid my mind was wandering. One thing I was thinking about was race relations. In the 'North'—as you say—we talk a lot about that these days and all decent people are trying to do something about it. But it looks to me like you have the problem pretty well solved here."

"Oh, I don't know about that," Juan modestly disclaims.

"Well, I think so. I've noticed that in the restaurants and hotels the Negroes sit where they please and always get the same courteous attention that everyone else does. I even noticed one place where a white man got off the bus and a Negro met him with open arms. They embraced. I can't quite imagine that happening in America."

"In North America," corrects Juan. "That reminds me," he continues, "of a story that Emma Martinez (may she rest in peace), one of the first Friends missionaries here, used to tell. One time a lady from the United States was visiting her at Yearly Meeting time and Mrs. Martinez saw an old friend, a Negro woman, from Gibara. She hadn't seen her for years so they embraced and kissed each other as women do in such circumstances. The American visitor was appalled and told Emma at the first opportunity: 'Emma, how could you kiss that black woman!' Emma looked at her blankly and said: 'Oh! Was she black? I hadn't noticed. Goodness, if I had maybe I wouldn't have kissed her'."

"Isn't there any distinction at all between the races?"

"Yes, I'm afraid there is. You remember the Spanish Club and the lovely Liceo Club we saw this afternoon? Those are white clubs, Negroes not allowed. Negroes are barred from most fraternal orders and many beaches are segregated. Then too . . ."

"Stop! You're disillusioning me. I guess we have many of the same problems after all. But I do think you have made more progress than we. If I were a Negro I think I would rather live here than in Amer . . .—I mean, the United States."

"What else have you been thinking about?"

"Why, I can't get those streets out of my mind . . . "

"You Americans are all alike. You would think that paved streets were next to godliness."

"Well, it's just that they create such an appalling spectacle. This town is obviously modern and progressive. You have modern stores, good schools, fine theaters and good hotels. Your most important streets, too, are fine. But most of the streets. . . Well, there just isn't any way to adequately describe them."

"We're working on it. Little by little we're getting them fixed."

"You'd better hurry. The whole town will choke to death from the dust before you get around to it."

"You Americans are always in too much of a hurry."

"You showed me a new monument in the park dedicated to 'Our Mothers.' Wouldn't it have been a more practical idea to pave another street instead so your living mothers would have cleaner air to breathe and wouldn't have to dust so much?"

"'Practical' is a good American word. Don't you remember that Jesus commended the woman who anointed Him with precious ointment, while Judas condemned her for being so impractical?"

"Yes, of course, but . . . well, to change the subject completely, I've noticed that very few children go barefooted in spite of the tropical weather. How come?"

"In this climate hookworm and all kinds of intestinal parasites are everywhere, so health considerations make it necessary. It is easy to become infected through bare feet."

"They've certainly done a good job of teaching them. Kids like to go barefooted. I always used to myself when I was a kid. Why I've even noticed some kids running around in the nude here except for their shoes. They never forget their shoes."

"That's right," Juan chuckles. "We learn to like our shoes. In fact they say Cuba is one of the largest per capita shoe markets in the world. We make most of our own shoes, you know.

Even export some. As to kids going around in the nude—or nearly so—that isn't so good. Too many of the poor homes have dirt floors and the children play in the patios where there are animals, so they very easily pick up parasites. Infection lurks wherever the body is exposed. Our Protestant Dispensary here in town is full every day of children that pick up infection in that way."

You have noticed the emaciated faces of the children from the poorer families. Perhaps parasites are responsible. Poor kids. You change the subject: "You seem to have quite a mosquito problem here."

"Oh, not so bad. If you leave the house open during the day and air it out well you don't have so much trouble. Have they been bothering you?"

"Well . . . I don't like to complain but they have pretty much made hamburger out of me. Why don't you use screens?"

"Screens? What's that? —Oh, yes, I think I know—you mean a kind of wire cloth you put over windows and doors. It's too hot to use that in this climate."

"Hot! Brother! I'd rather sweat a little than swat mosquitoes and flies."

"You Americans are so practical."

"Well, anyway, these mosquito nets are all right for sleeping."

"Sure. What more could you want?"

You finally drop off to sleep and dream about someone trying to sell you lottery tickets.

Monday has been set aside for a trip to Grandfather's farm. You are to take the 6:00 o'clock bus, so that means early rising. It starts on the hour and you roll along smoothly over the well-paved street. But before you know it the pavement peters out. Bump! What on earth was that? A broken axle? Did a wheel come off? No, just a little bump in the road. You roll along smoothly again for awhile, then more bumps and the driver shifts gears and you creep along for miles and miles. You come to a stream and as you leave the road to cross it you see the sturdy

concrete abutments of a bridge that was never completed—must have been standing like that for twenty years. People keep getting on: farmers with their heavy "machetes" slung from their belts, some carry small bags with produce of one kind or another, one brings a squealing pig in a sack, several carry roosters—fighting cocks it is explained—which they fondly smooth and cajole in their laps. All are friendly and conversation is continuous and animated.

You, meanwhile, begin to be thankful that you ate a light breakfast. Your stomach feels uneasy and your head begins to swim a little. But just at that moment the conductor mercifully calls out "Los Pasos" which is your stop. Thank goodness. Waiting at the little country store is Grandpa with three horses. You are going a couple of miles farther.

"But how did Grandpa know we were coming?" you ask Juan. "Does he have a telephone way out here?"

"Oh, no. No telephone. I sent a message through the bus driver yesterday. He told the storekeeper and he told someone who was going that way. That's the kind of telephone we use in the country here."

"Good! It seems to work all right, anyway."

Grandpa is quietly and graciously friendly. He is obviously pleased to have a guest from so far away and he is determined to make your visit a pleasant one. Your horse is a good one, though even that doesn't put you entirely at your ease. It has been so long since you were on a horse.

At the farm Uncle Tomas is already about some very important business! roasting a pig. It is a real barbecue job with the animal on a pole being rotated slowly over an open charcoal fire. Smells delicious. You feel quite overcome that all this is being done just for you.

"A little American touch," you comment to Juan. "'The barbecue is an old American custom, though we reserve it mostly for political rallies."

"Sorry to disillusion you," laughs Juan, "but it's a still older Cuban custom. The Indians were doing it when Colum-

bus came here. In fact our oldest city is called Baracoa, which comes from the Taino 'barbacoa' from which in turn comes your English-American word 'barbecue'."

"Small world, eh?" you conclude.

The aroma of the roasting pig is tantalizing but it isn't done yet so you accept Don Fernando's invitation to stroll around the farm a bit. Don Fernando, you understand, is Grandpa. He is obviously proud of his farm—as indeed he may well be, for luxuriously bursting forth from that rich black soil are corn, beans, peanuts, pineapples, watermelons, bananas, oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons, sugar cane, cocoanuts, and just to add to variety a wide assortment of such things as coffee and cacao. It is colossal. What more could Eden have offered?

But now the roast pig is ready. What a feast! The main dish, of course, is the roast pig itself. It is quite a pig, too, weighing nearly 100 pounds. Don Fernando cuts off generous slabs which you eat wrapped in a moistened piece of unleavened casava bread. Nothing quite like it, you affirm. No wonder it is the favorite Cuban dish. Everyone joins in round the pig, including the women who are very courteous and rather quiet and reserved. The Cuban farm is a man's world and they quickly obey orders from Don Fernando and Uncle Tomas.

As you make a pig of yourself eating pig you begin to ponder what all this prodigality of nature has brought Don Fernando in the course of a long life. The house: a conventional "bohio." Bark walls, thatched roof, dirt floor, four tiny rooms, oil lamps of a sort, water drawn from an open dug well with a rope, chickens wandering through the house and even the pigs sneaking in occasionally to be promptly booted out again. Grandchildren in their birthday suits romp around on the dirt floor in very close contact with the animals. Is this what Paradise is like? But the people—you can't get around that fact—they are tops. Never have you seen such generous and genuine hospitality, or a people so possessed of a natural grace and ease in all circumstances.

On the way back in the evening you talk it over with Juan. "With a farm like that why hasn't Grandpa done better?"

"Done better?" he repeats. "Grandpa's done all right. You ought to see his bank account."

"But that house!" you protest. "With a sizeable bank account how can he live in a place like that?"

"He's never known anything else, Roger, and doesn't want anything different. Besides he doesn't feel he's nearly rich enough to afford any luxuries. The Spaniard—and his Cuban descendant—speaks much about his desire to 'establecer un capital'—I guess you would say 'make a fortune,' except that when the Cuban says it he is really in earnest about it. Many people will make all manner of sacrifices, denying themselves all pleasures and luxuries until finally after many years they have accumulated enough to cease from productive labor for the rest of their lives and can afford anything they can reasonably desire: Extended visits to Spain or the United States, regal gifts to their children and friends and a handsome inheritance for their children at death."

"That's a far cry from us Americans who buy automobiles and television sets on the installment plan with a few dollars down and barely enough income to keep up the payments. Don't you use the installment plan at all here?"

"Oh, yes, we're using it more and more as our small middle class grows larger. Many of them are 'up to their ears' in installments, as you say. And I'm afraid I can't say they're much happier for it."

"Well, wherever you are, too much concern about things can be a cause of a lot of trouble. 'The love of money,' they say, 'is the root of all evil'."

"Yes, so often material possessions simply take the joy out of life. We have a toast that expresses what I think is a healthy philosophy—and in a way a national one: 'Salud y pesetas—y tiempo para gozarlas'—'Health and wealth—and time to enjoy them!' You can't take it with you, you know."

The return trip seems much shorter and you hardly notice the bumpy road. In an incredibly short time you have returned to the world of modern motor traffic, trains, radios, newspapers, theaters and crowds of people. The excursion into the country seems like a dream, an Alice in Wonderland adventure.

There is much more to see and do. You don't learn how five million people live in a day. You and Juan talk incessantly everywhere you go. The Cuban woman, you discover, has complete equality with man, legally, but custom limits her more than her American cousin. The moral code for girls is much stricter than in the States, although men tend to be somewhat libertine. Men have clubs in which they spend most of their free time chatting, playing cards and domino, while wives usually stay at home. Religion, as you have already observed, is woman's affair and it is rare to find an enthusiastic churchman. Divorce, and especially desertion abound above all among the lower classes. Illegitimacy is fairly high and men occasionally have a second wife or two—concubines they are called—more or less openly.

What about labor? Nearly all organized under a militant federation, with Communist influence very strong in the ranks. Wages much higher than ever before, but perhaps half on the average of those in the United States. Few telephones, but many messenger boys. Few mechanical dishwashers, but many cheap servants. Few vacuum cleaners, but many cheap maids. Few electric stoves, but many cheap cooks to cook with charcoal. Education free but not effectively compulsory with private schools badly needed to fill in the gaps.

At length as your visit draws to a close you turn the question on Juan: What does he think about it all?

"It's like this," he begins slowly, "I love Cuba from the bottom of my heart as a native son. I would be most ungrateful if I didn't, knowing how my forefathers had to sacrifice to give us the great country we have today. But I admit it is hard to get ahead here—impossible to get a good job unless you have pull. It's hard to start a business of your own and the

cost of living is very high. There is plenty of reason for young people to get discouraged. A great many of my friends have emigrated to Miami and New York and they all have good paying jobs which they like. Emigration tempts all of us at one time or another. But I figure that my place is here. I want to be an engineer—that's what I'm studying at the University now. I want to build roads and schools, irrigation systems and houses—anything I can do to make Cuba a better place to live in. To me that's the highest kind of patriotism . . . Sometimes I think I'll design some modest but decent homes for the campesino and dedicate my life to a crusade for doing away with the 'bohio.' Too long our poets have sung the praises of this picturesque relic and — it is beautiful at a distance—but the time has come to do away with it. You Americans are proud that Abe Lincoln was born in a log cabin but you wouldn't want people to live in them nowadays."

"It looks to me like even more important would be better roads in the country," you interject, "That would help the campesinos in so many different ways . . . "

"Yes, that needs to be done too—and who knows? I may be a road-builder. But really first of all I want to be a Christian citizen. I want to help everyone to get a fair chance, education for everyone, better sanitation and health service, more wholesome recreation, more cultural opportunities. Your great President Roosevelt (may he rest in peace) spoke of the four freedoms: Freedom from fear and want, freedom of speech and religion. We need those, especially the first two. I don't think we want to follow your American way of life in all respects, although we are great admirers of the American way, but we do want to follow the simplicity and sincerity of the Quakers, and above all I hope we can follow Jesus Christ."

"Nice speech Juan, and I wish you luck. We could use a lot like you in my country."

"Thank's, but I guess you'll have to struggle along without me. It will take me a whole lifetime to fix up my own country, I'm afraid."

Tomorrow you start for home, but before you go Juan wants you to climb the great stairway that leads to the top of the mountain "La Loma de la Cruz" on the edge of the city. On the first steps you find a dozen goats peacefully chewing their cuds and oblivious to your arrival. The stairs is all your own and you climb slowly, taking time to rest now and again as you go. And then as you reach the top you turn and see it—the broad valley in the soft light of the setting sun. Directly below you is the even, symmetrical pattern of the city, but to your amazement it is green with trees. You had found the streets completely barren with the houses coming out to their very edge.

"But, Juan!" you exclaim, "Where did all those trees come from? Did they set them out while we were climbing?"

"Hardly," laughs Juan. "Now if we were Americans we might do a thing like that, but those trees have been right there all the time. Don't you remember the tree in the patio behind our house? Everyone has one or two. We have them hidden from the street where we can enjoy them in privacy."

The view is lovely. As the flaming sun drops down behind the western hills you note that the cross that crowns the mountain stands out in dramatic silhouette. It is one of those moments too solemn for speech.

And now tomorrow has come. Less than an hour ago you said goodbye to the charming Perez family at the neat, modernistic airport at Holguin and now your great Constellation drones on over the beautiful green patchwork of cane fields toward Miami. The lovely blue-green of the interminable shallows of the Cuban north coast, a score of little islands—and then the deep blue sea. A ship or two, looking as tiny as bathroom toys, wending their ways through the Florida straits and leaving a great wake behind them, a Navy blimp hovering over the water like a floating cigar, great piles of nebulous

meringue stretching from the sea to the vaulted heavens, a soft, stray, white cloud like a cherub's pillow floating so close to your window you would like to reach out and touch it—then the gleaming, white, angular skyline of Miami.

You think of the cross silhouetted against the setting sun on that mountain-top in Cuba and you have a choking feeling as you anticipate setting foot again on the soil of your own, your native land . . . America the Beautiful . . . Bella Cuba . . . "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof . . . the whole earth is full of His glory!"

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